

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2322-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subc. on Environment & Climate Change
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Shimkus
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subc. on Environment & Climate Change
2322-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, Chairman Tonko and Ranking Member Shimkus:

In advance of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce's Hearing entitled "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Reform: Addressing America's Plastic Waste Crisis," I respectfully write to you in support of my bipartisan legislation, H.R. 5906, the Recycling Enhancements to Collection and Yield through Consumer Learning and Education (RECYCLE) Act.

This bill authorizes \$15 million per year for five years in grants to states, tribes, nonprofits, public partnerships, and local governments who seek to increase community outreach, awareness, and education with regards to recycling.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the recycling rate¹ in the United States is just 35 percent, with nearly \$9 billion worth of recyclable materials being thrown away each year.² Even among those who do recycle, reports have indicated that 1/3 of materials that are put into household recycling bins ultimately end up in landfills, either because the material is not recyclable or is not accepted by that community's recycling program. These materials contaminate the recycling stream, resulting in lower quality recycled material that are unable to be sold for reuse and ends up as waste.

¹ The recycling rate is the percentage of diverted refuse that is recyclable.

² "Recycling: Protecting the Environment, and Growing the Economy." U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, November 2018. https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-11/documents/americanrecyclesday_booklet-12.pdf.

Consumer confusion on how to properly recycle is one of the top recycling challenges. That is why education and outreach are necessary to both increase participation in recycling and decrease contamination in the recycling stream. The bipartisan RECYCLE Act will create a new federal grant program through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help educate households and consumers about residential and community recycling programs.

Additionally, H.R. 5906 will direct the EPA to develop a model recycling program toolkit to deploy and improve recycling rates. Further, it will require the EPA to more frequently review and revise its Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines. These guidelines designate products containing recycled materials and provides recommended practices for federal agencies to purchase such products.

I applaud the Committee for taking up this important and often misunderstood issue. The RECYCLE Act is a bipartisan step towards addressing long-running challenges for the recycling industry. I look forward to working with the Committee to include this important legislation that will clean up our recycling stream.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Phillips', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dean Phillips
Member of Congress